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CHICAGO'S AMERICAN  
Chicago, Illinois  
July 22, 1963

## Tobacco Export Problem

RICHMOND, Va. — Because Dixieland is tobacco land, it's a golden moment here. Harvesters of the 1963 crop are entering the fields.

It takes more care and patience to grow good tobacco than to grow orchids. Yet this is our fourth largest crop and it's really the foundation story of American history.

It preceded the importance of cotton by a full century. It shaped the careers of our great colonials and later great Americans, as it had shaped the careers of great explorers from the day Christopher Columbus first saw it in San Salvador.

This remarkable crop represents our earliest economic struggle and victory. In 1616, our London receipts were for only 2,300 pounds as compared with 50,000 pounds from Spain. By the time of our Revolution, Spain had been defeated forever as our rival.

### **Ruled Economic Thinking**

The crop guaranteed the permanence of Jamestown and the Virginia and Georgia [Savannah] colonies. It was the source of the American merchant marine, the American market place, and actually dominated the economic thinking of our founding fathers.

Most farming is hard work. Nature knows no 8-hour day. But this crop requires the longest work for any kind of farming.

There are generally about 7,800 individual tobacco plants per acre. Bright tobacco is picked by hand, leaf by hand, as it is ripening now. This is "priming." Each plant must have six or seven "primings" per plant to



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protect it. The United States department of agriculture estimates that 495 man-hours are required to raise and harvest just one acre.

Even then, a fine crop can be lost in the curing barn. There the farmer must circulate heated air around his bundles, and alternately raise and lower temperatures so his leaves will breathe and cure properly. This demands great skill, constant care.

I write this from Virginia, our nation's traditional tobacco center. Yet a surprising 16 states, nearly one state in every three—many of them a very long way from Dixie—grow the temperamental crop; from Florida north and west to Missouri and Wisconsin. And in six of the states this is the most valuable crop.

### **Battle for World Market**

Meanwhile, the battle for our fair share of the world market for the world's favorite tobacco intensifies. Red China is in the midst of an enormous tobacco development. The U. S. S. R. is an increasing supplier, as is Brazil. But even our best friends abroad collar our product by prohibitive tariffs, quotas, and other limitations, and numerous foreign monopolies prohibit its unrestricted competitive sale in manufactured forms.

As one result, in a world experiencing a population explosion, its export accounts for an increasingly small percentage of United States production. Yet its export is vital in our balance-of-payments problem and gold outflow crisis.

Foreign trade should be a two-way street. A stiffer, more determined attitude by our government with our foreign friends toward our fourth largest crop would be a true attack on the dangers and drift in our red-ink debtor position.

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